

I cannot proceed without also expressing my gratitude to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HOBSON), the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLITTLE), and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. VISCLOSKEY). Their commitment to improving our Nation's water infrastructure is evident in this legislation. I thank both of California's Senators for their efforts on Sacramento and California's flood control needs. I appreciate Senator FEINSTEIN's leadership in the conference committee. To the energy and water appropriations staff, particularly Peder Maarbjerg and John Blazey, your long hours and hard work are much appreciated.

Their efforts reflect not only the incredible investments that must be made to improve our infrastructure across the Nation, but also an acknowledgment that we must wisely spend each dollar. This legislation adds new measures to ensure that the Corps manages each dollar efficiently.

To improve the execution of projects, the Corps is directed to develop a 5-year comprehensive budget plan and vision for water infrastructure in the country to comprehensively integrate financial planning and project management. Further, while the Corps will still have the flexibility to occasionally shift project funding as needed, the Corps will no longer be able to consistently use this practice.

By working together, the Congress, the administration, and the Corps of Engineers will be better prepared to ensure that limited Federal resources are spent efficiently, commitments to local sponsors are honored, and projects remain on schedule.

This bill moves our country forward on many levels, from improving local water infrastructure to bigger-picture Corps of Engineer financial management and efficiency issues.

In light of the realities our Nation faced this year, I hope Congress will continue this commitment to public safety and significantly invest in water infrastructure. I strongly support the underlying conference report and look forward to voting in support of the measure.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2862, SCIENCE, STATE, JUSTICE, COMMERCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 538 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 538

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2862) making appropriations for Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

House Resolution 538 waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration and provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 538 and the underlying conference report for H.R. 2862, the Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2005. This conference report provides \$57.85 billion, \$2.5 billion less than the President requested, to fund the Departments of Justice, Commerce and State along with NASA, the National Science Foundation, the Federal Communication Commission, FCC, the Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, the Legal Services Corporation, and the Small Business Administration, SBA.

□ 1100

In recognition of the continual requirement to reassess our security and law enforcement needs, this conference report establishes responsible priorities to enable law enforcement to meet threats abroad and at home in order to secure our communities.

Madam Speaker, this conference report provides \$5.8 billion for the FBI, an increase of \$547 million above fiscal year 2005 and \$15 million above the President's request. It provides \$1.7 billion for the Drug Enforcement Agency, the DEA, and this is a \$48 million increase above fiscal 2005, and it is \$8 million below the President's request.

It provides \$802 million for the United States Marshals Service, and this is an increase of \$42 million from

fiscal year 2005 and actually \$12 million above the President's request.

Additionally, included in the conference report is \$924 million for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, an increase of \$41 million above fiscal year 2005, and it is the same as the President's request.

Further, this conference report contains \$2.7 billion for assistance to State and local law enforcement for crime-fighting initiatives, \$1.1 billion above the President's request and actually \$287 million below fiscal year 2005.

This amount includes \$405 million to reimburse States for criminal alien detention costs, \$387 million for violence against women prevention and prosecution programs, \$416 million for the Edward Byrne Discretionary Grants program, \$340 million for juvenile delinquency prevention and accountability programs. It includes \$109 million to eliminate DNA analysis backlogs, \$140 million for law enforcement technologies and interoperability, \$64 million for methamphetamine hotspots, and \$40 million to reduce gang violence.

Madam Speaker, this conference report appropriates \$6.6 billion for the Department of Commerce, marking a decrease of \$37 million from fiscal year 2005 and a \$2.9 billion increase from the President's request.

Recognizing the importance of space exploration that has fascinated minds for generations and provided many breakthrough technologies, this conference report matches the President's request of \$16.5 billion to NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Agency, and this is \$260 million above fiscal year 2005. The bill provides funding for space exploration and the space shuttle program, restoring the aeronautics research program. Additionally, the National Science Foundation would receive \$5.65 billion of much-needed funding to drive American research and education, thereby keeping this country on the cutting edge of advanced technology and research.

This conference report also provides \$9.6 billion for the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, including \$1.6 billion to continue worldwide security improvements and replacement of vulnerable embassies; \$4.4 billion for diplomatic and consular programs; and \$652 million for international broadcasting, including expanding broadcasting to the broader Middle East.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this conference report includes \$456 billion for the Small Business Administration, \$290 million for the Federal Communications Commission, \$888 million for the Securities and Exchange Commission, and \$331 million for the Legal Services Corporation.

While this conference report is not perfect, all in all it adds up to better protection for our communities, stronger law enforcement at home, more vigorous diplomacy abroad, and improved scientific research and technology. This is the kind of fundamental

support that Americans expect from this Congress. These are true national priorities, balanced with our budgetary restrictions and with fiscal responsibility in mind.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues' support of the rule and the underlying conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, with the passage of this rule, this House will consider the Science, State, Justice, Commerce and related agencies appropriations conference report for fiscal year 2006. I want to begin by congratulating the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the chairman of the subcommittee, and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOLLOHAN), the ranking member, for working together to create a bill that seems to be a fair and responsible piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that budgets are moral documents, and where and how we decide to spend the taxpayers' money says more about our values as a society than any speech or political rhetoric possibly could.

This conference report, among other things, rightfully retains language included in the House-passed bill that prohibits funds being used to support or justify the use of torture by the United States Government. Despite the rhetoric coming from the White House, this language is both necessary and appropriate.

As the most powerful democracy in the history of the world, we have a moral responsibility not only to promote the expansion of our democratic values around the world, but perhaps most importantly, to demonstrate our commitment to them through our own practices and in the legislation we pass here in the Congress.

One of the most dramatic and significant tests of that commitment is before us today in the debate over our own use of the abhorrent practice of torture. The United States of America, as the leader of the free world, cannot and must not engage in a behavior which has been condemned around the world by the international community. To engage in such a heinous practice is a betrayal of our own values as defenders of freedom and liberty.

The fact that those who would seek to take away our freedom and the freedom of others utilize such techniques is in no way a justification here.

As a matter of the highest national security, we must openly and outright reject the use of torture as a means of achieving military victory in this or any other war. Our ideals as a Nation demand nothing less. Indeed, the fact

that we must even engage in this debate on the House floor is indicative of the deep crisis of conscience which has embroiled the White House.

Senator JOHN MCCAIN is working hard to build on the language in this conference report with regard to torture and include language in the DOD authorization bill prohibiting the use of torture and to make real and meaningful policy changes. His amendment is important. It is broadly supported and should be signed into law as soon as possible.

It is disconcerting that, as we speak here today, the White House is fighting Senator MCCAIN and others who support his initiative every step of the way. Senator MCCAIN certainly knows a lot more about the reality of detention and torture and the ineffectiveness of torture than the President, the Vice President, or the Secretary of Defense.

The recent revelation that the United States has secret prisons around the world and that there is no accountability or there is no oversight of what goes on in those prisons, quite frankly, is a national scandal.

This is not what America is about. This is not what America stands for, and the sad reality is that the reckless behavior of this administration when it comes to torture has put our own soldiers in more jeopardy.

Mr. Speaker, America can do better; and once we pass this conference report, I hope we will all join in a bipartisan way to support Senator MCCAIN's effort to ban torture as a policy for this country once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the conferees once again stripped the Sanders provision from this bill that would have prevented funds in the bill from being used to implement provisions in section 215 of the PATRIOT Act. These provisions permit searches of library circulation records, library patron lists, book sales records, or book customer lists.

This amendment passed by a vote of 238-187, yet the Republican leadership has decided to strip it out of the bill. This is wrong and these provisions, like so many others in the PATRIOT Act, quite frankly should be stripped out of the bill as well.

Mr. Speaker, the American people do not want this provision. A majority in this Congress do not want this provision, and yet somehow it managed to basically be null and voided in the conference committee.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this conference report includes language prohibiting the White House from blocking the importation of discount prescription drugs through trade agreements. That means that the White House cannot subvert the House's authority by preventing the American people from having access to life-saving, affordable prescription drugs. I strongly believe that access to affordable medication and health care should be a right in this country and not the fodder of a po-

litical power struggle. Health care should be a right in the United States of America and not a privilege.

I applaud my colleagues in both Houses for demonstrating the rare political will to constrain the power of this White House in the interest of protecting the American people.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, budgets are moral documents, and this budget is a statement of America's principles. The level of funding the committee had to work with is woefully small because of the fiscal ineptitude of the Republican leadership in Congress and the Bush administration. Their policy of tax cuts for the rich and a continual growing of the Federal deficit has forced important programs like legal services for the poor and COPS funding to be cut. This is irresponsible, and this does not reflect the wishes and values of the American people.

With that, Mr. Speaker, let me once again commend Chairman WOLF and Ranking Member MOLLOHAN for making the best out of a bad situation. I appreciate their help and their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill fails the tens of thousands of Texans living along the Lower Rio Grande River Valley. It is difficult to fault the conferees for this failure since they approved every dollar requested by President Bush and his Administration for flood prevention, but this Administration appears to have learned absolutely nothing from the Hurricane Katrina disaster when it comes to protecting poor people from being inundated by the failure of defective levees.

Along the Rio Grande River in the Valley, we have some 270 miles of levees and numerous drainage structures and floodways that are meant to protect our citizens from flooding. All of this levee infrastructure, every bit of the levees, is not city, it is not county, it is Federal infrastructure.

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) is a tiny Federal agency based in El Paso, Texas, and it reports through the Department of State, through Secretary Condoleezza Rice here in Washington, to the President. Its director is appointed by the President. It was originally set up to define and protect the boundary between the United States and Mexico. Now it has responsibility for seeing that the levees under its jurisdiction protect the Valley's growing population, which includes one of the poorest populations in the United States.

Only the Federal Government can change, alter, or improve these levees. The dozens of local governments, the businesses, the homes of tens of thousands of American citizens are all at risk when the Federal administration shirks its responsibility to protect them as this one has done.

In New Orleans, we saw levees breached at a terrible cost, suffered by many, but a cost particularly borne by the poorest citizens of that city.

In the Valley, as in New Orleans, the Federal Government cannot justifiably claim that “nobody anticipated a breach of the levees,” as President Bush mistakenly declared on September 1 of this year, in offering his first of many excuses about the Katrina disaster.

In June of 2003, the IBWC itself, the Federal agency in the Bush Administration with the expertise and the sole responsibility for these levees along the Rio Grande, issued its report entitled “Hydraulic Model of the Rio Grande and Floodways.”

□ 1115

It concluded that a 100-year flood, the type that could be produced by a hurricane with far less punch than Katrina, will result in the levee system being overwhelmed along many river miles at a variety of locations. This is the type of flooding that will shut down the McAllen-Miller International Airport, affect the international trade zone and bridges, and will inundate thousands of homes and businesses, endangering people across the Rio Grande Valley.

Nor do the similarities between the Rio Grande Valley and New Orleans end with the deficient preparation of the infrastructure that this bill fails to address. After Katrina, we learned that positions at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, were filled with political cronies. Less well-known, but equally important, indeed more important to my constituents in Texas, are the findings that were made this year concerning President Bush's appointment of the Commissioner of the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission, who recently departed. His appointee, who had responsibility for these levees and the protection of thousands of Texans, was criticized earlier this year by the General Accountability Office as “rewarding long-time friends with ranking positions” and “provoking a hemorrhage of qualified personnel, personnel who protect against floods, monitor the safety of water, and assure back-up electrical power for Texas.”

Sounds a lot like the great job that Ol' Brownie did. And as the painful footage of Katrina shows, the price to be paid by Americans is grave indeed.

We know that sea levels are rising around the world, and the Gulf of Mexico has entered a cycle of intensified hurricane activity: Katrina, Wilma, Alpha, Beta, so many hurricanes we ran out of names for them. But for the grace of God, had they headed toward the mouth of the Rio Grande River, we would be seeing on the evening news flood victims in Hidalgo, in McAllen and in Mission being rescued. Yet, despite repeated calls for action, the Bush Administration did not add one thin dime to its construction budget in

this bill to protect our Valley residents.

This is a chart right out of the IBWC's own report showing by color, 6 feet in purple, 6 feet over the top of the existing levees with a major flood. Five to 6 feet, all this red, 2 to 3 feet over the top of the levees. What is going to happen to the City of Hidalgo? What is going to happen to all the businesses and homes and tens of thousands of people who live in this area if we do not provide an adequate amount of funding to repair the levees?

This bill approves every dime the President asked for, but he is failing the Texas Valley. He is failing to learn the lessons of Katrina and protect the people of the Rio Grande Valley, who live in the poorest statistical metropolitan area, McAllen-Mission, in the entire United States. The Federal Government is failing to meet its responsibility to provide them the security that the people of New Orleans did not have.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, let me close as I began today by pointing out to my colleagues that this conference report prohibits funding from being used by the United States Government for torture. We need to make this the absolute policy of our country.

Friday is Veterans Day, and we need to do everything we can to honor our veterans, but we can honor our veterans in part by doing everything we can to protect the soldiers who are now on the field, and that must mean making torture something that this country will never be part of.

I am horrified, quite frankly, by the behavior of the White House on this issue. They attempted to try to undermine what Senator McCain has tried to do in the Senate and what some of us have tried to do here in the House. Those who believe that torture should have no place in America or American society are frustrated by what the White House is trying to do. We are a much better country.

The U.S. Army Manual bans torture, prohibits it. And one of the reasons why is because those who are in the military understand that it jeopardizes the lives of Americans, of American soldiers. How do we demand that the international laws be respected and that if one of our citizens was taken as a prisoner that they not be abused or tortured if it is not the policy of this country to prohibit torture in any shape or form? We need to do better, Mr. Speaker.

I will just conclude by saying that I urge my colleagues to support this bill. We do not have any problem with the rule. But I would also urge my colleagues, once this bill is passed, to join with those in the Senate in a bipartisan way to prohibit torture once and for all. This should not be part of America. We are much better than this. We do not stand for that. And if the White House does not get the mas-

sage, we need to force the issue and to send them a bill that in fact has this prohibition in it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts, regarding some of the statements he made about torture. Certainly the provision in this bill concerning that prohibits funds, as he pointed out, from being used in any way whatsoever to support or justify the use of torture by any official or contract employee of the United States Government. I know the gentleman was not suggesting that this President or any Member of this Congress condones torture.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity, not once but twice, to visit the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and on each occasion I was accompanied by a Member from the other side of the aisle, a respected Democratic member on the Armed Services Committee. This was long before, Mr. Speaker, the occurrence at Abu Ghraib in Baghdad. Again, I say I went on two different occasions and at no time did I see any evidence whatsoever of torture.

What I did see was the International Committee of the Red Cross there interviewing the detainees in privacy, without any detention officers or any member of our military present. So these detainees had every opportunity to complain, and certainly complain they did.

I know as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, that a number of our troops were reprimanded because they overreacted on occasion when they were cursed and spat upon and had human excrement, feces, and urine tossed in their face. But this is not cruel and inhumane punishment.

I know the gentleman from Massachusetts is a great advocate of human rights, and I think he is right on what he is standing up for. And, again, the unfortunate occurrence at Abu Ghraib at Cellblock 1 on the night shift by a few miscreant Reservists is deplorable and intolerable, and it will not be tolerated. I know that our military responded and responded in the correct way. So, certainly, I just want to say I agree with the gentleman on his comment that we cannot tolerate that.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GINGREY. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. Again, my point is that if in fact we can all agree that torture is abhorrent and something that should not be part of this society, then I hope we can all in a bipartisan way support the effort of Senator McCain, who wants to make it the policy of this land.

My problem with the White House, quite frankly, is that I am puzzled why they are trying to lobby to undermine what Senator McCain is doing. I am also quite frankly shocked by the recent revelations in the Washington

Post about these secret prisons that we have all over the world where really, basically, there is no accountability.

So my point is, if we can all agree that this is wrong, let us make it the absolute law of this land and comply with what the U.S. Army Manual says and support Senator MCCAIN in his efforts. And I hope we can do that in a bipartisan way, and I thank the gentleman.

Mr. GINGREY. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I will simply close by recognizing the hard work and the incredible effort of Subcommittee Chairman WOLF and all of the House and Senate conferees. Reconciling differences between the two Chambers is rarely a simple task, but I believe they have once again risen to the occasion and they have produced a conference report that may not please everybody with everything, but it gets the job done by appropriately balancing our spending needs with our budget.

Mr. Speaker, the American people demand and they expect responsible spending to support law enforcement, strengthened diplomacy which builds upon our competitive edge. Today, it is my hope that we have delivered. So I ask my colleagues for their full support of the rule and this underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1751, SECURE ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND COURT PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 540 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 540

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1751) to amend title 18, United States Code, to protect judges, prosecutors, witnesses, victims, and

their family members, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 540 is a structured rule which provides 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. It waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. It provides that the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary and now printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment and shall be considered as read. It waives all points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute.

□ 1130

It makes in order only those amendments printed in the Rules Committee report accompanying this resolution. It

provides that the amendments made in order may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent. It shall not be subject to amendment or a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. It waives all points of order against the amendments printed in the report and provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of House Resolution 540 and the underlying bill, H.R. 1751, the Secure Access to Justice and Court Protection Act of 2005.

First, I want to extend my gratitude to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Chairman SENSENBRENNER) of the Committee on the Judiciary. I also would like to thank the ranking member, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) as well as the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT), the author of this important piece of legislation.

As I previously noted in my opening statement for the rule on H.R. 420, the Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act of 2005, this past month has ushered in the passage of very meaningful and very significant legislation to reform and strengthen our courts both procedurally and substantively. Today we have an opportunity to strengthen our courts in a more literal sense by protecting them against a rising tide of violence that has harmed and claimed the lives of innocent individuals charged with enforcing and upholding our laws.

It was only a number of months ago that tragedy struck the Fulton County courthouse in Atlanta, my home State of Georgia. There, as most of America watched and sorrowfully remember, on March 13 a cold-blooded killer took the lives of four innocent people, forever robbing their families and depriving our legal system of the distinguished service of Fulton County Superior Court Judge Rowland Barnes, age 64; his court reporter, Julie Anne Brandau, age 46; Fulton County Sheriff Deputy Hoyt Teasley, age 43; and Federal agent David Wilhelm, age 40.

Mr. Speaker, law and order, not violence, should permeate our courts. Accordingly, H.R. 1751 would take important steps to deter and punish those who would exact revenge because they were caught in a criminal activity.

First, this bill will further punish any individual who would seek to influence, impede, or retaliate against a judge, a prosecutor, a law enforcement officer, or their families by increasing the penalties and providing new mandatory minimums such as 30-years-to-life mandatory minimum for kidnapping.

Additionally, each and every day men and women in law enforcement and public safety across this country proudly don their uniforms, fully recognizing that they represent their cities, States and their country; and they